

Transportation Access and Unemployment: An Application of the “Spatial Mismatch Theory” in Jackson, Mississippi

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The lack of affordable transportation is an economic barrier to the poor who live in the inner city and rely on public transportation as a primary mode of travel to emerging job markets in the ring cities. In the City of Jackson, Mississippi, the central city of the metropolitan statistical area, public transportation infrastructure has changed little over time, even as job and residential growth has shifted outward to ring cities. The need for better public transportation networks to the outer areas is becoming increasingly more pressing as the region’s economic development moves outward and away from the central city. Study results indicate that the primary job growth for the Jackson Statistical Metropolitan Area (JSMA) is occurring outside of the existing public transit service area which is constrained by the boundaries of the city. Therefore, the likelihood of individuals who rely on public transportation as a primary means of mobility to secure and maintain jobs outside of the City of Jackson is extremely remote. The importance of the linkage of jobs and transportation is often cited as a primary quality of life determinant for individuals and families. Social demographics of the area indicate that a significant number of those left inside the central city are minorities and the less affluent who do not have the means to escape (economically or socially) the severe poverty conditions that exist therein.

This research evaluated the existing public transportation routes and accessibility to the emerging job markets in the tri-county region in Jackson, Mississippi in relationship to the changing economic and residential growth patterns in the region. The study builds on existing research that has been conducted in other regions of the United States, but not particularly in the South, or in small to medium-sized cities. The South offers significant differences in terms of politics, geography, resources, ethnicity, culture, and values that make providing for the needs of the region’s inner-city poor more of a challenge. Findings from the study should offer guidance in developing specific transportation policies for linking job access and low-income neighborhoods in the South, similar to the Jackson Mississippi Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Emerging job markets in the outlying regions of metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) and existing fixed transportation routes, coupled with the decline of high paying inner city jobs have created significant obstacles that must be successfully addressed if the inner-city poor are to obtain opportunity to successfully participate in the changing economy. *Getting to work* is shared by most Americans. However, the way in which they *get there* varies across geographical and socio-economic circles. For many, particularly the inner city poor, who do not own an automobile, just *getting there* poses almost overwhelming challenges because of where they live and limited public transit accessibility options, particularly as metropolitan areas expand outside existing public transportation fixed routes (Rupured 2000).

In areas where accessible and affordable public transportation is available, it is one of the primary modes of travel used by the inner city poor. This population tends to have lower educational attainment levels and job training skills. They are commonly employed in the manufacturing sector or low skilled service jobs. A significant number of the poor do not own a personal vehicle, and therefore they must rely on public transportation as a primary means of mobility (Rupured 2000). Affordable and accessible public transportation often determines the location and maintenance of employment.

It would behoove city and transportation policymakers to address the causes and consequences between where the inner city poor reside and changing patterns of job growth that are occurring not only inside the city but also in the outlying growth regions. Identifying the factors that impinge upon the success or failure of the dependent inner city public transit resident is critical in order for social, economic, and political success to be realized (Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist 2005). This is not a new issue for urban areas because it was first identified in the literature more than five decades ago in larger cities. Provision for accessible and affordable public transportation for the poor has not been a significant priority in small MSA's across the Southern United States. Public transportation is becoming more of an issue as the smaller cities of the Southeast begin to experience urban sprawl.

John Kain's seminal work on the inter-and-intra relationship of residential location and job sites for inner city residents postulated that joblessness and low wages among African Americans are, in part, the result of their separation from high-wage job opportunities that are increasingly being located in suburban areas (Kain 2006). Kain's work became known as the Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis (SMH). An ongoing scholarly debate regarding the relationship between job growth, residential housing patterns, and job access between the inner city poor and jobs has become increasingly more critical in the past decade. Although Kain's initial work did not specifically address the issue of transportation, it certainly is something that must be factored into the equation. Numerous studies have sought to understand the relationship between job access, social mobility, and transit impacts in the ensuing decades. Generally there has been a lack of agreement amongst researchers in both the cause and effect of this issue.

Recent studies have concentrated on the primary question of *what impact, if any does transportation, residential and job location play on the unemployment levels in the urban area*. Research works by Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist, Kain, and Holzer support Kain's SMH, correlating unemployment with job decentralization. The research efforts of Holloway, Taylor and Ong, Cooke, and Ellwood argue against the validity of the

hypothesis (Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist 1998, Kain 1992, Holzer 1991, Holloway 1996, Taylor and Ong 1995, Cooke 1993, Elwood 1986). Ellwood concluded that measures of job access are not significantly related to black and youth unemployment, thus endeavoring to discount the earlier findings. Subsequent studies concluded that industrial transportation of metropolitan economies produce high rates of unemployment. Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist found that the average travel time have greater effects on employment levels of black youth. Additional research by Ihlanfeldt found that poor job accessibility contributes to labor market problems of inner city minority workers. In 1995, Taylor & Ong concluded that SMH was not supported by commuting differences between racial groups. Such mixed outcomes from the research suggest a strong need to understand this phenomenon, the policy processes, implications, and impacts. The inherent disagreements among the researchers poses a significant hurdle for researchers, politicians, and metropolitan planners, particularly in light of increasing joblessness and generalized inner city decline.

The ethnic and rampant poverty mix that exists within the South are particularly challenging to policy makers who are charged with providing equitable opportunity for the poor. Transportation and political decision makers at all levels of government (federal, state, and local) often mirror the power arrangements of the dominant society and its institutions (Bullard 2000). This is especially the case for the South, where decision-making and policy implementation are influenced by divisive regional, racial, and social influences. Michael Lipsky's (1980), *Street Level Bureaucracy* noted the significance of this relationship, particularly when policy is translated into practice. Lipsky argued that economic and social outcomes, be they successful or otherwise, will impinge not only on the policies and the administration, but it comes down to how those policies are actually implemented. Lipsky postulated that the available choices considered, decision(s), and outcomes are determined by the professional and personal philosophies of the implementers of public policy, whether at the federal, state, or local level.

Policy makers and political leaders have long been concerned with the decline of the central city, inner city job competition, state and local finance, and what role the federal government should play in public transportation development (Leichenko 2001). Traditionally, policy makers and politicians have sought quick and temporary solutions, such as empowerment zones, urban renewal, reverse commute, and welfare-to-work programs to this very complex situation. For example, the City of Milwaukee sought to place a number of low interest loan and job creation programs in depressed regions of the area with varying degrees of success. In fact, the employment situation is now considered worse today than before many of the programs were implemented (University of Wisconsin 2003). Recent transitory changes resulting from Hurricane Katrina, escalating energy costs, unemployment, and low economic conditions of the South have prompted an urgency to address many of the inherent issues of the spatial mismatch that surround public transportation in the region, particularly in Mississippi and Louisiana, those areas impacted most by the hurricane.

Region

The City of Jackson, Mississippi, its ring cities, and the surrounding tri-county region are the focus of this research. The Jackson MSA is located in central Mississippi and encompasses the capital city, the most populous metropolitan area in the state. The

MSA is composed of five counties—Hinds, Madison, Rankin, Simpson and Copiah—with the central city predominately surrounded by Hinds, Rankin, and Madison Counties. In 2004, the total population for the tri-county region was 460,340 persons with 56.9% (249,987) of the population living in Hinds County, 16.9% (81,973) in Madison County, and 26.2% (128,380) in Rankin County. The City of Jackson, which is located inside Hinds County, has a population of 184,256 persons.

The 2000 U.S. Census, by race, noted that approximately 232,055 persons (50.4%) of the tri-county region are white, 201,027 persons, (43.7%) are African-American, and 27,258 persons (5.9%) are of other races (US Census 2000). African Americans, the predominant minority group, make up 61.1% of the Hinds County population, while the minority populations in Madison and Rankin (37.5% and 17.1%, respectively) are significantly lower. African Americans make up almost three-fourths, or 70.6%, of the City of Jackson population (CMPDD 2005).

Regional Demographics

Economically, the counties reflect dramatically different patterns of income, poverty, unemployment, and population growth. In 2000, the State of Mississippi's per capita income was \$17,922, which was \$4,471 (17.7%) below the national average of \$21,587. During that same period, the per capita income for Hinds County was \$17,785, 17.6% below the national average. Madison County's per capita income was \$23,469, approximately 9%, above the national average. The per capita income for Rankin County was \$20,412, which was 5.4% below the national average. The City of Jackson, which is located within Hinds, reported a per capita income of \$17,116, or 29.8% below the national average (US Census 2000). The poverty rate for the Jackson Mississippi MSA was 18.0%, which is less than the overall state rate of 21.6%. Hinds County recorded a 19.9% poverty rate while the City of Jackson had a 23.5 % poverty rate. The poverty rates for Madison and Rankin Counties were 14.0% and 9.5%, respectively (US Census 2005). Both were significantly less than the poverty rates for Hinds County and the City of Jackson.

The tri-county area has an available civilian labor force of 234,610 persons with 14,100 unemployed persons, which is 6.0% of the total available civilian labor force. The available labor force for Hinds County was 123,690 persons with 8,600 persons, or 7.0% unemployed. In July 2005, the City of Jackson, located in Hinds County had an available labor force of 88,740 and 7,070, or 8.0%, were unemployed. Madison County had a labor force of 42,220, and 2,250, or 5.3%, were unemployed. Rankin County had an available labor force of 68,700, and 3,250, or 4.7%, were unemployed. A recent study, *The Central Mississippi Area Workforce Report (2005)*, estimated that in addition to the 10,380 recorded unemployed in the area there were estimates of over 68,000 individuals who were underemployed, or employed under their skill level in the area. Additionally, it was noted that a significant number of currently unemployed people were not actively seeking work (Ibid 2005). As with the poverty rate, unemployment was considerably lower in Madison and Rankin Counties, than for Hinds or the City of Jackson. The unemployment rate above does not include people who have stopped looking for work or discouraged job-seekers or those otherwise not in the civilian labor force. In essence, when it comes to employment, Jackson MSA really contains two labor markets: one in the city, and one in the suburbs

The United States Census Bureau reported that for the period of 1990-2005, the tri-county region experienced a 16.4% increase in population growth (US Census 2005). However, a closer look at the statistical data reveals a conflicting picture of population, economic and demographic growth among the components of the region. Hinds County experienced a population loss of 1.43% and the City of Jackson reported a population loss of 0.6%, while Madison and Rankin County reported large population growth rates of 38.8% and 32.3%, respectively (CMPPD 2005). The City of Jackson has reported population losses for the past two-and-half decades (Ibid 2005).

Relationship of Social Economic Factors as a Determinant of Location and Poverty

There has been little disagreement among scholars and policy makers regarding the impact of racial segregation, particularly in the inner city, as a key determinant of poverty. Studies conducted in the ensuing years have sought to understand the relationship between poverty, race, job accessibility and the impact on certain dimensions of social and economic life, particularly in relationship to urban sprawl (Stoll 2001). Michael Stoll focused on understanding the relationship between metropolitan residential locations, poverty, and urban sprawl to race (Ibid 2001). Raphael and Stoll's research concluded that because blacks are more geographically isolated from jobs regardless of region or metropolitan area size, they tended to remain the most segregated from jobs (Raphael and Stoll 2002). This is significant in that the primary ethnic group in the Jackson Metropolitan Statistical Area is black. Additionally, he and other researchers noted that the more decentralized the jobs were in the central cities, the greater the challenges and longer recovery for minorities living in metropolitan areas during periods of economic downturn (Sanchez 1998). Similar studies have examined racial differences in transportation access to employment and determined that commuting times tended to be higher for workers who are from low income, ethnic groups, and public transit users (Chung, Myers and Saunders 2001). A commonality between these studies was the ability of the worker to get to the jobs in the region and in a manner that is manageable for both the employer and the employee.

Transportation Challenges for the Inner-City Poor

The research regarding transportation accessibility challenges for the inner city include:

- 1) Social and political competition between regional governmental entities for capital investment and development;
- 2) Spatial mismatch of the poor and the out-migration of high growth job centers;
- 3) Exodus of the affluent and the increasing concentrated social ills within the central city;
- 4) Limited availability of affordable transportation to high job growth ring cities.

The Social and Political Competition between Regional Governmental Entities

Carl Abbott argues that the underlying economic and political strategies of ring cities have become increasingly separated and self interested, thus often leaving the

concentrated social ills trapped in the central city (Abbott 1981, 473-87). Abbott, in his article *The Political Transformation of Sunbelt Cities* (1981), summarized that regional planning, annexation and deference to core city leadership have been weakened by the out-migration of the central city's most affluent and the creation of suburban ring cities. These smaller (ring) cities have created socio-economic differences among themselves and their larger neighboring central city. Abbott noted that this differentiation impacts the Sunbelt cities by creating significant inequities in the intra-metropolitan allocation of the benefits of growth and government structure as ring cities have continued to evolve. This evolution is evident in the City of Jackson, Mississippi.

Evan McKenzie's *Morning in Privatopia* (1982) reinforced Abbott's work citing that the spread of common interest development could potentially accelerate the decline of cities, affecting the political balance of power in urban and suburban America. He declared that bastions (ring cities) of the white middle class would compete with central cities for residents by offering homogeneous populations, physical security, stable housing values, local control, and freedom from the exposure to the central city's social ills (McKenzie 1992, 413). While this phenomenon is more recent in the South and smaller cities, major US cities experienced their explosion of "common interest developments" in their suburban rings much later.

Spatial Mismatch of the Poor and Out-migration of Job Centers

Residential location combined with the dispersion of metropolitan employment tends to isolate low-and-semi skilled workers from emerging suburban employment opportunities. According to Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist, the creation of entry-level job growth, particularly in the manufacturing sector, which is the appropriate skill level for low income and inner-city poor, is occurring in isolated pockets of the suburbs and far away from the inner city neighborhoods (Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist 2005). This is particularly evidenced in the recent explosion of car manufacturing plants across the southern corridor of the United States. Car manufacturing facilities are locating outside the central cities. Most are located on or nearby interstate highways making it very accessible for those with personal cars to get to work easily. For example, the Nissan Plant in Canton, MS is located outside the City of Jackson and the existing fixed public transportation routes.¹ The location of automobile assembly facilities to the south is a recent phenomenon.

The Exodus of the Affluent and the Increasing Concentration of Social Ills within the Central City

White and increasingly middle-class flight of all minorities from the central cities to the suburbs have led to a greater isolation of the inner city poor and greater concentration of social ills within the area. Social ills, according to William Julius Wilson, are neighborhoods dominated by joblessness, racial segregation, increased single-parent homes, while becoming isolated from middle class society and the private economy, thus creating a cycle of dependency (Wilson 1991). The neighborhood isolation tends to create complex economic and social woes which significantly limit the likelihood of upward mobility for the residents (Ibid 1991). Of great importance is the literature that suggests that children who are raised in these areas are significantly impacted by the quality of local services, socialization by adults, peer influences, social networks, exposure to crime and violence, and physical distance and isolation of the area

(Ellen and Turner 1997). Empirical evidence suggests that as a result, the inner city poor find themselves trapped in a culture that discourages upward mobility and segregates communities based on race and income. Commonly in environments such as the one described, a society emerges with expectations and patterns of behavior that contrast strongly with middle class norms (Massey and Denton 1993).

The isolation of the poor is being facilitated by political, economic, and civic leaders through zoning regulations of the suburbs such as limited apartment development, housing size and lot regulations. John Powell found that suburban regulations and zoning serve to limit the opportunity to leave the central city for those who are at the lower rung of the socio-economic ladder, leaving them locked in severe poverty and unlikely to achieve upward mobility. Primary reasons cited for exodus from the central city to the ring cities include new housing choices, safer neighborhoods, better schools, and lower taxes (Powell 2002).

The exodus of the affluent and educated precipitates an exodus of economic investment in the ring city regions. As the affluent and the educated moved to the suburbs, the central city experienced a significant decline in its tax base. The central city is left with fewer dollars to maintain a decaying infrastructure while struggling to provide for the basic healthcare, education and transportation for the citizens that remained within the city—citizens with a high probability of relying on governmental assistance (So and Getzels 1988). The loss of money and the affluent exacerbation of the social, economic, and political isolation of the region creates islands of concentrated poverty and social ills.

The results of the out-migration of the affluent and the educated from the central city has led to a fragmentation of the metropolitan areas into multiple, competing local governments creating segregation and a superfluous number of entities that control key regional powers, such as planning and zoning, and work to the detriment of the region as a whole (Rusk 1995). As the socio-economic decline migrates outward from the central city to older suburbs, middle-class homeowners are fleeing even further, thus forcing many of the aging edge cities to address similar issues (Danielson 1992).

Limited Availability of Affordable Transportation to Job Growth in Ring Cities

As a result of the topography of the South, southerners are almost totally dependent on private vehicles. Data from the 2005 US Census indicates that 92% of the population in South and 95% of Mississippians commute to work in private vehicles. The prevalence of private transportation in the region is due in part to the lack of well-developed public transit systems that are commonplace in other regions of the country and a propensity of the locals to view public transportation as an unacceptable alternative.

Historically, the trend toward suburbanization was propelled by the automobile. In the early 1900s, people tended to either live within walking distance of their workplace or within walking distance of public transportation. However, with the advent of the automobile, people were allowed more opportunity to live outside the scope of these choices, and thus created the opportunity for more sprawl in the urban regions.

Culturally, the South is geared toward private automobiles for several reasons—low density populations, local land-use policies, political competition between suburban and urban governments, and a lack of state and regional support (Sanchez, Stolz and Jacinta 2003). Perhaps more than any other region of the country, public transportation in the South is viewed more as the primary mode of transportation for the poor and non-white populations. In larger metropolitan areas, particularly in the Northeast and Central

United States, public transportation systems are more favorably viewed and utilized by the general population. However, in the South, particularly Jackson, Mississippi, public transportation which is predominately bus service is utilized almost entirely by individuals who lack any other means of mobility. In fact, low income transit riders (household incomes less than \$20,000) make up nearly one-half of the bus-riders, while riders with higher incomes (over \$100,000) dominate the commuter rail category (Ibid 2003). However, due to inner city fixed transit routes in the South, the only transportation available to many inner city residents without automobiles to the outer rings of the city is a taxi cab.

Methodology & Data Analysis

The research methodology employed to investigate and describe the current status of public transportation in the Jackson Metro area is a mixed methods approach. The questions that were investigated to indicate the status of the area public transportation are the following:

1. Has there been a significant residential and economic shift from City of Jackson and Hinds County to the ring cities of Madison and Rankin Counties?
2. What is the competitive atmosphere for the economic investment money among the local officials of the Jackson Metro Area?
3. What is the impact of ethnicity and culture on the free-flow of area capital and economic development?
4. Has there been an exodus of the Jackson's affluent and educated to its outlying regions creating a greater concentration of social ills and poverty within the central city?
5. Does affordable public transportation exists that allows the inner city poor to acquire and keep jobs beyond Jackson City limits?

Quantitative analysis, primarily times series, for the period of 1960 through 2005 was used to determine the extent to which variables 1, 3, and 4 explain the current state of public transportation in the Jackson Metro area. Variable 2 was investigated utilizing the qualitative approach of interviewing selected area economic development officials. Descriptive analysis of variable 5 was used to explain where new job growth is occurring and the availability of affordable reliable public transportation.

The data used for this analysis is primarily secondary data derived from the US Census, the Mississippi Development Authority, the Central Mississippi Planning District and the City of Jackson. The 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000 US Census provided the primary data for this analysis. The American Community Survey, published by the US Census Bureau, provided the statistics for the mid-decennial population census statistics. Regional statistics of the Mississippi Development Authority and the Central Mississippi Planning and Development were also used. Unstructured interviews of metro area officials were conducted to determine the existence of inter-local economic development cooperation among the region's local officials.

Findings

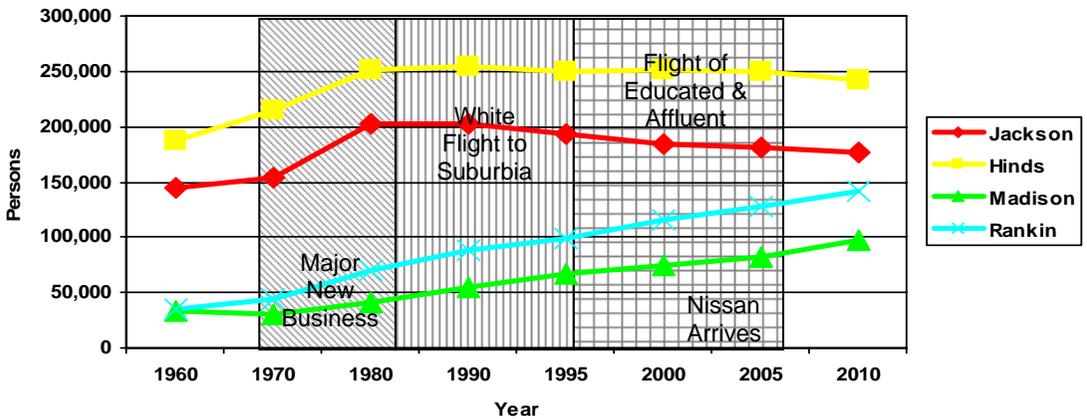
Study results indicate five key findings. 1) A significant residential and economic shift has occurred from City of Jackson and Hinds County to the ring cities of Madison and Rankin Counties; 2) The exodus of the affluent and educated to the outlying regions is creating a greater concentration of social ills and poverty within the central city. 3) Local entities outside the City within the area are in fierce competition for the economic investment monies which negatively impacts the City’s ability to provide much needed resources to the entire JMSA; 4) Factors beyond the free flow of capital are influencing area investment and economic development; 5) Affordable public transportation beyond Jackson’s city limits is virtually non-existent, while the primary job growth market for which the inner city residents’ skill sets might be appropriate is occurring outside the existing public transit routes.

Population Shift

The Jackson Metro Area has experienced several population shifts since 1970. The shifts can be explained in four distinct categories—the southern migration of industry from the north, white flight to suburbia, all race flight of the educated, and the race flight of the affluent. The most recent category is the arrival of a Nissan automotive assembly plant. Figure 1 describes the redistribution of the area’s population within the categories from 1960 through 2010. The period beyond 2005 is based on an estimate by the US Census Bureau. From 1960 through the mid-1980s, the all areas experienced growth as northern businesses located in the metro area.

Figure 1 notes the changing racial and educated balance in the City of Jackson and to neighboring Madison and Rankin Counties.

Figure 1. Population Trends of Selected Areas of Metro Jackson from 1960 to 2010



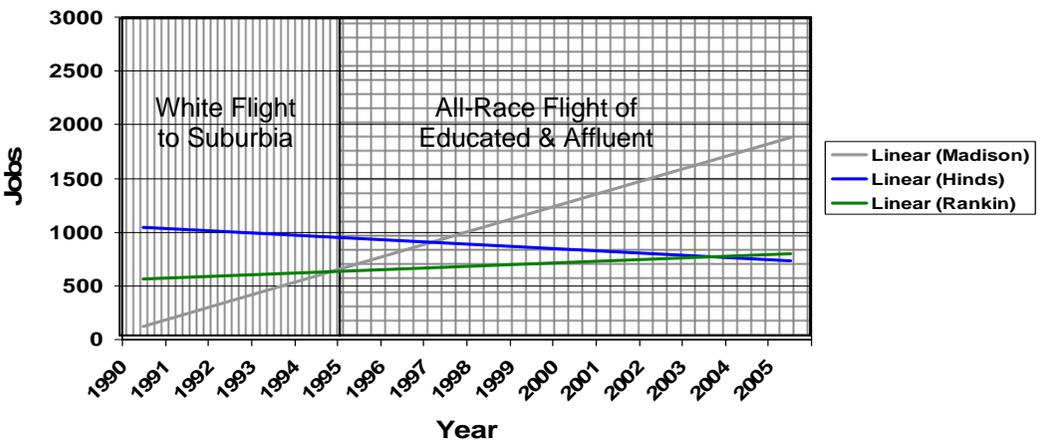
Source: 1970, 1980, 1990 & 2000 U.S. Census; Mississippi Development Authority

Jackson’s population began to decline from a decennial high of 202,895 persons in 1980 to 202,010 persons by 1990. While the initial numbers were small, they signaled the beginning of the exodus from the central city to the adjacent counties of Madison and Rankin. Since 1980, the City of Jackson has lost 22,400 persons from its population count—approximately 11% of 1980 population level. For the same period, Rankin County grew from 69,427 persons to 128,380 persons, an increase of 86 percent. Madison County’s population increased from 41,613 persons in 1980 to 81,975 persons, a 97% increase. Not all of the population movement from the City of Jackson was relocation to Madison and Rankin counties. However, a significant portion of the population loss was relocation to Jackson’s suburban areas. The impact of the population to Jackson was twofold—1) the loss of existing population and 2) the loss of its growth (people relocating to the metro area).

Economic Shift

The economic base of the City of Jackson is also shifting to its surrounding cities and contiguous counties. All of the localities surrounding Jackson are experiencing significant economic growth in terms of new facilities and new jobs. Figure 2 depicts the employment trends of the Jackson Metro Area. Job growth has been the most significant in Madison County, which has added approximately 12,000 jobs since 2000, approximately 58% of all jobs generated for the tri-county area. During the same period, Rankin County added 4,000 new jobs, 20% of total jobs for the area, and Hinds County accounted for 4,300 jobs or 22% of the area’s total jobs. Job generation in Hinds County is not occurring in Jackson but in its ring cities of Bryam and Clinton. Jackson is experiencing the loss of many of its businesses to its outer rings as they seek to position themselves in more profitable and safe settings. It is important to note that the businesses that are locating outside of the City of Jackson are also positioning themselves outside of the current provision of fixed route public transportation.

Figure 2. Jackson Metro Area New & Expanded Employment Trends 1990 thru 2005

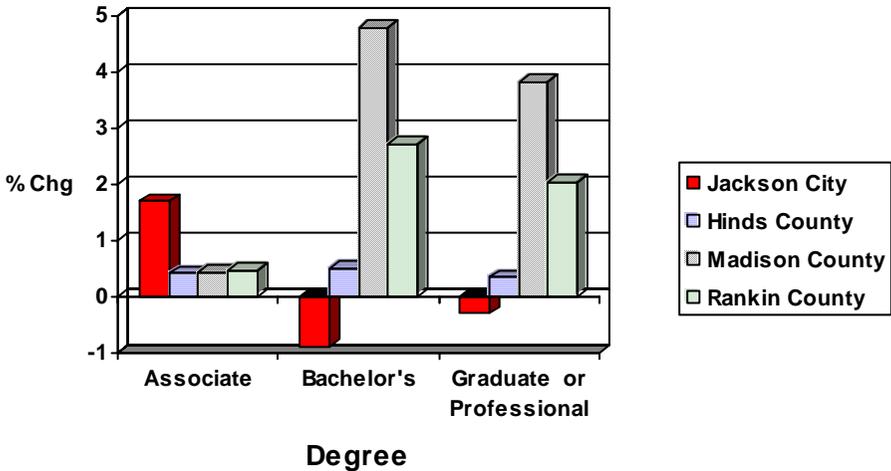


Source: 1970, 1980, 1990 & 2000 U.S. Census; Mississippi Development Authority

Flight of the Affluent and Educated

White flight from Jackson began in the late 1980s and was the precursor of all race flight to suburbia that included the area’s most affluent and educated. In search of safer neighborhoods and lower taxes, professionals began to relocate to Madison and Rankin, as well as those moving into the area. This situation is depicted in Figure 3 where Jackson had negative growth in the number of persons 25 years and older with graduate or professional degrees since the year 2000. Jackson had a negative 0.9% decline in the number of residents with bachelor degrees and a 0.3% decline in the number of residents with graduate or professional degrees. In the meantime, Madison County increased its number of bachelor degrees by 4.8%, and Rankin by 2.7%. Also, the number of graduate and professional degrees increased 3.8% in Madison County and 2.04% in Rankin County.

Figure 3. 2000-2005 Metro Jackson Area Higher Education Degree Distribution Percent Changed

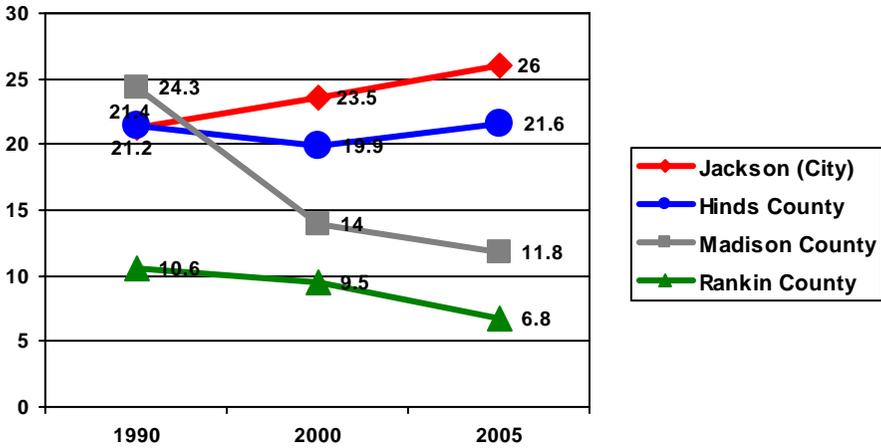


Source: U. S. Census Bureau and 2005 Fact Finder

Concentrations of Poverty

Since 1990, amidst the initial exodus of whites and its educated and affluent, Jackson has seen the percentage of its population living below the poverty level increase from 21.2% to a high of 26% by 2005. Figure 4 describes the Jackson Metro Area’s rate of poverty since 1990. In the 2000 US Census, twenty-four of Jackson’s census tracts were identified to have 30% or greater levels of poverty.ⁱⁱ However, Hinds County, the parent county of the City of Jackson, experienced a modest increase in its percentage of residents living below the poverty level—a 1.7% increase since 1990. This is indicative of the fact that the ring cities within Hinds County did not experience the loss of population or an exodus of their affluent. Madison and Rankin Counties experienced significant decline in their poverty rates for the same period. The level of poverty decreased in Madison County from 24.3% in 1990 to 11.8% in 2005. Similarly, Rankin County’s poverty rate declined from 10.6% in 1990 to 6.8% by 2005.

Figure 4. Jackson Metro Area Percent of Poverty 1990-2005



Source: 1970, 1980, 1990 & 2000 *US Census* and Mississippi Development Authority

Income Shift

The analysis of the Jackson Metro Area income in Table 1 below explains the exodus of Jackson’s educated and affluent population on the City and its surrounding counties and cities. Since 2000, the per capita income for the City of Jackson has lagged behind that of Madison and Rankin Counties. Jackson saw a 14.5% increase in its per capita income as compared to a 22% increase for Madison County and a 19% increase for Rankin County. Jackson’s per capita income increased \$2,480, from \$17,116 in 2000 to \$19,596 in 2005. Madison’s income increased \$5,219, from 23,469 to 28,688. Similarly, Rankin County’s income grew by \$3,885, from 20,412 to \$24,297.

Table 1. Metro Jackson Area Per-Capita Income 1990-2005

Place	2000	2005	Chg.	%
Jackson City	17,116	19596	2,480	14.5
Hinds County	17,785	20,456	2,671	15.0
Madison County	23,469	28,688	5,219	22.2
Rankin County	20,412	24,297	3,885	19.0

Source: United States Census Bureau; 2005 American Fact Finder

Local development entities of the Jackson Metro area are in fierce competition for the economic investment money. The success of the suburban entities has negatively impacted the City’s ability to provide any significant economic growth. There appears to be a significant correlation between capital investment and job growth. The entrepreneurial approaches to economic development by local governmental entities are

heavily laden with polices that are designed to attract investment to the individual locality with little consideration given to any benefits for the City of Jackson. Local and regional economic development organizations all but excluded Jackson from their short-term and long-range development plans. The City is primarily fending for itself without a regional or state development agency assisting its development efforts.

Local economic development officials point out that there is no economic development for Jackson. The Central Mississippi Planning and Development District's Strategic Plan does not include Jackson. The Metro Area Chamber of Commerce's focus has been cited on development outside of the City. The Chamber's emphasis on development outside of Jackson has been so successful that there have been calls by Jackson city officials to pursue a City of Jackson Chamber of Commerce. Local officials further disclosed the unlikelihood of any significant development on a regional level that would include the City of Jackson.

Factors beyond the Principle of Free Flow Economic Capital

Factors beyond the principles of free flow of economic capital are at work which deters the economic investment and development of Hinds County and the City of Jackson. Political and social isolation of Jackson and Hinds County by its suburban neighbors is influenced by the ethnicity of the population majority and the local governmental officials. The politics of ethnicity appear to be a pervasive determinant of cooperation between the regional governmental entities of the MSA that includes the cooperation of the state government and its planning entities. As evidenced in the demographic data previously provided, Hinds County and the City of Jackson have become increasingly dominated by their African American population in both residents and political leadership. Coinciding with the transfer of political leadership to its African American population, Hinds County and the City of Jackson have become more isolated from the region's predominately white counties and cities. Comparatively, the City of Canton, located in Madison County, is also predominately African American and is facing similar political and economic isolation.

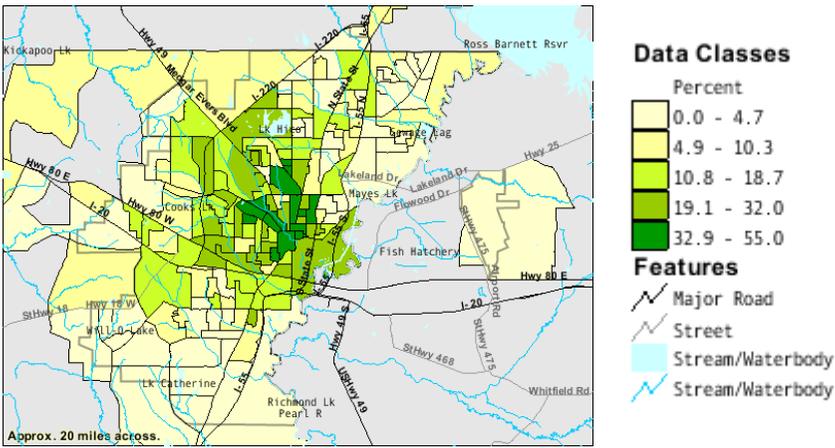
Furthermore, there is the issue of rural versus urban. Jackson is the only city in Mississippi with a population significantly above 50,000 people. The state legislators are primarily from small towns and rural settings that do not identify or empathize with the state's largest city and as a result it becomes challenging to acquire any support at the state level to assist the City in overcoming its challenges regarding economic development and investment. The Mississippi State Legislature has not permitted the City of Jackson, a "creature of the State," to tax any income of its workers that live beyond the city. The majority of Jackson's high income workers live outside of the central city--primarily in Madison and Rankin Counties. They commute into the city on a daily basis to make money, but do little in the form of taxation to provide for its existence. Therefore, this situation leaves the city without means to collect taxes from those who benefit the most from use of city services and facilities of the city for their livelihood.

Availability of Affordable and Reliable Public Transportation

For the Jackson residents who do not own an automobile, affordable transportation is virtually non-existent to the City's outer rings. There is no provision of public transportation beyond the city limits of Jackson. The 2000 US Census reported

that approximately 11% (7,596 units) of all occupied housing (67,805 units) had no vehicle available for transport. The total number of units without vehicles is composed of 2,266 owner-occupied units and 5,330 renter occupied units. Figure 5 below depicts the lack of vehicle ownership in the City of Jackson. In some areas of Jackson, the level of occupied housing units without access to a vehicle is as high as 32.9 to 55%. Clearly, the need for public transportation exists within the city. However, workers age 16 years and over reported in the 2005 American Community Survey that almost no workers use public transportation to get to and from work.

Figure 5. City of Jackson Percent of Occupied Housing with No Vehicles Available



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

The City of Jackson is served predominately by JATRAM, the areas only public fixed routes transportation provider. The transportation system offers 15 fixed routes that provide coverage throughout the city limits and up to three miles beyond. A few routes have limited Saturday service to shopping malls and hospitals. The current system provides no Sunday service or service after 9:00 P.M. during the weekdays. Given the constraints of availability, persons looking for work without vehicles are not likely to use the public transit system.

Other modes of transportation available include demand-response service, consisting of 5,310 providers and taxicabs. Private transportation providers offer transit 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Disadvantages of the 5,310 transport are availability, including a 48-hour prior notification requirement and limited capacity. The use of taxis tends to be more reliable in getting to work, but is cost prohibitive. For example: the cost of using public transportation is \$32 a month on JATRAM (or \$384 a year), whereas the cost for a private transportation (taxi fare) to the job location the greatest distance away (Nissan Plant) is \$2,041 a month or (\$24,492 a year).

Conclusion

The lack of affordable and accessible public transportation acts as an economic barrier for those who live far from sites of new job creation within the area. Jackson's public transportation infrastructure has changed little over time, even as residential and job growth has shifted outward. The need for enhanced public transportation networks, particularly to the outer areas, will become even more pressing as economic development continues to move outward and away from the central city. The primary job growth for the area is occurring outside the public transit service area, impacting persons who rely on public transportation to secure and maintain these jobs.

The City of Jackson is in the midst of a significant population, social and economic decline, and is becoming a victim of suburban sprawl. The economic and political growth of the localities outside of Jackson is no longer a phenomenon that is being experienced only in the larger regions of the country. Central city neglect and suburban sprawl are taking place throughout the Deep South as bedroom communities and economic development are growing at very rapid rates. It is increasingly necessary that new economic and residential development in these regions, particularly in the area of public transportation, be linked to provide at a minimum job access to the metro area central cities. The elixir to this situation is affordable and assessable transportation. It would behoove local governmental entities to put aside territorial competitiveness and combine their economic and political capital to create and implement a plan to meet transportation needs of the entire region.

There is an absence of intergovernmental action to link Jackson's growing inner city poor to the jobs that are being created in its outer growth rings. The findings of this study indicate that a mismatch exists in the area between poverty concentrations and active job growth. Public transportation is a key factor in the unemployed gaining access to jobs and maintaining them. As a result of this mismatch, the poor, the primary users of public transportation, are unlikely to apply for secure work where public transportation is limited or non-existent. The existing growth patterns for the area support the need for enhanced regional strategies and policies to provide reasonable transportation connections between the jobs and where the poor reside. Without transportation access, the inner city poor are locked out of the growing suburban job markets. Recommendations deduced from this study include the following:

- 1) Develop and restructure area economic development efforts to be more inclusive of the area's poor and Jackson, the central city;
- 2) Identify the strengths and weaknesses in the regional labor force in order to provide an advantage to the region and address regional competitiveness;
- 3) Develop cluster and industry specific analysis which will serve to identify the forces that drive regional economies and give them a competitive advantage over other areas;
- 4) Identify reliable economic indicators to assist local leaders in identifying strengths and weaknesses in the regional economy, and monitor changes over time; and

- 5) Evaluate the existing needs and usage of public transit services in the region for inner city residents and outlying employers.

The recommendations call for more proactive and collaborative regional economic, social, transportation planning amongst business and political leaders in the entire JMSA.

Additionally, efforts should begin to educate the public on the need of public transportation to alleviate the perception among the region's population that public transportation is the mode of transportation for only the poor. Increased usage by the general public would benefit everyone economically, socially, and health-wise, especially since fuel cost have escalated in the past few years. Changing perceptions is never easy but the issue of perception must be addressed before any universal plan of public transportation can be effectively implemented. As long as current perceptions and preferences exist, regardless of the type and accessibility of public transportation provided, there will be few users.

Additional research is needed to determine whether any current methodologies exist among other Southeastern US cities that might address the transportation needs of the Jackson MSA.

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ⁱ Kim Hill, and Emilio Brahmst, "The Automobile Industry Moving South: An Examination of Trends," *Center for Automobile Research* (2003): 12. Automobile manufacturing plants in the south include: BMW located at Spartanburg, S.C with approximately 1,350 employees; Honda located in Lincoln, AL with approximately 2,000 employees; Nissan located in Smyrna, TN with approximately 3,587 employees; TMM-Kentucky, located at Georgetown, KY with approximately 5,006 employees; Mercedes-Benz located at Vance, AL with approximately 2,000 employees; Nissan located at Canton, MS with approximately 5,800 employees; Hyundai located Hope Hull, AL with approximately 2,200 employees.

ⁱⁱ Concentrated Poverty is defined as the percentage of the poor that reside in high poverty neighborhoods. A high poverty neighborhood is one which has 40% or more of residents classified as poor using the federal poverty standard. US Census (2000).